

# **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program New Jersey State Plan 2006 - 2010**

## **State Objectives**

- To promote the restoration of aquatic and upland habitats for New Jersey's declining or important native fish and wildlife species.
- To create, restore, enhance or maintain habitat for at-risk fish and wildlife species in New Jersey.
- To reduce the impacts of invasive, exotic species on New Jersey fish & wildlife habitats.

## **Habitat Priorities**

### Early Successional Habitat

Create, restore or manage for early successional habitats such as grasslands, savannahs and emergent wetlands that provide habitat for declining wildlife species. An emphasis will be placed on establishing native plant species, including those species that provide nectar, pollen and larval food sources for pollinators that will benefit agriculture in New Jersey.

### Disturbance Dependant Habitats

Manage habitats that depend upon a natural or human-induced disturbance in order to create conditions suitable for regeneration or maintaining these unique habitats. Habitats such as Atlantic white cedar forests, scrub/shrub habitats and fire dependent plant communities are examples.

### Wetland Habitats

Create, restore and manage wetland habitats including forested wetlands, coastal wetlands and riparian habitats. Focus is on land not likely to be funded by the Wetlands Reserve Program.

### Priority Area – Delaware Bay Region

Create, restore or manage any fish and wildlife habitat in this critical area of New Jersey that only includes Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties.

### Priority Species – Bog Turtle

Enhance or maintain habitat for this federally threatened species that occurs on farms infrequently, throughout New Jersey.

## Practices to be Emphasized

Eligible practices for WHIP in New Jersey will center on site preparation and establishment of native plants communities, control of invasive exotic species, management practices to retain vegetative communities and some specific practices for specific fish and wildlife species. A list of NRCS NJ FOTG practices that will typically be used for the five Habitat Priorities is provided below:

### Early Successional Habitat

314 Brush Management  
647 Early Succession Habitat Management  
643 Restoration & Mgmt. of Declining Habitats  
327 Conservation Cover  
386 Field Border  
422 Hedgerow Planting  
460 Land Clearing  
512 Pasture and Hay Planting  
338 Prescribed Burning  
645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management  
528 Prescribed Grazing  
646 Shallow Water Management for Wildlife

### Disturbance Dependant Habitat

314 Brush Management  
460 Land Clearing  
643 Restoration & Mgmt. of Declining Habitats  
612 Tree and Shrub Establishment  
338 Prescribed Burning  
490 Forest Site Preparation  
666 Forest Stand Improvement  
528 Prescribed Grazing  
645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management

### Wetland Habitat

396 Fish Passage  
584 Stream Channel Stabilization  
391 Riparian Forest Buffer  
390 Riparian Herbaceous Cover  
646 Shallow Water Management for Wildlife  
580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection  
395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Mgmt.  
612 Tree and Shrub Establishment  
644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management  
658 Wetland Enhancement  
659 Wetland Restoration

### Priority Area – Delaware Bay Region

645 Upland Wildlife Habitat Management  
644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management  
646 Shallow Water Management for Wildlife  
647 Early Succession Habitat Management  
658 Wetland Enhancement  
659 Wetland Restoration  
643 Restoration and Mgmt. of Declining Habitats  
580 Streambank and Shoreline Protection  
314 Brush Management  
395 Stream Habitat Improvement and Mgmt.

### Priority Species – Bog Turtle

658 Wetland Enhancement  
659 Wetland Restoration  
382 Fence  
314 Brush Management  
644 Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management  
646 Shallow Water Management for Wildlife

## Partnership Involvement

WHIP in NJ since 1998 has had successful partnerships with state and federal wildlife agencies in New Jersey including the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. In addition non-governmental groups such as the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ, Trout Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Quail Unlimited, the New Jersey Audubon Society and others have provided financial and technical assistance to landowners enrolled in WHIP, reducing the cost burden to landowners and NRCS NJ and making our WHIP program dollars go further.

NRCS NJ currently has two agreements with partners that help provide technical assistance to NRCS and landowners in New Jersey for fish and wildlife habitat enhancement. A contribution agreement with the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife provides 50% of the funding for a state-employed, private lands biologist to be located in a NRCS NJ Service Center to help the local NRCS staff implement WHIP and other wildlife related programs. Under a cooperative agreement with the Conserve Wildlife

Foundation of NJ (CWF) a second foundation-employed, private lands biologist is stationed in two different NRCS Service Centers. CWF provides full salary and benefits and NRCS provides office space, phone and a computer to help the local NRCS staff implement WHIP and other wildlife related programs

### **Application Evaluation and Ranking Process**

NRCS NJ utilizes a ranking process that gives priority to those applications that support the greatest improvement benefits to wildlife habitat. Ranking criteria include ecological considerations, economic considerations and societal benefit considerations. A habitat appraisal is conducted for each WHIP application to assess habitat improvements planned.

### **Measuring Program Success**

NRCS NJ has several partnerships that will help provide some important monitoring data about wildlife populations targeted with WHIP funding. NJ Audubon, the Conserve Wildlife Foundation and the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife are involved in a multi-year project to monitor grassland habitat in New Jersey for the presence of grassland birds. In 2006 the monitoring included WHIP sites where landowners that have given permission for the monitoring to occur. Monitoring of WHIP sites is planned to continue throughout the project and data will be shared with NRCS. All NRCS NJ WHIP bog turtle sites are monitored for habitat conditions and bog turtle occurrence by the NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife biologists. The NJ Division of Fish & Wildlife will monitor fish populations and share data with NRCS from streams where WHIP was implemented for fish passage projects such as dam removal.

NRCS NJ will collect performance data about WHIP applications and contracts annually including:

- Number of applications received
- Dollar value of applications received
- Acres under contract
- Number of individuals and groups funded
- Dollar value of partner contributions
- Dollar value of participant contributions
- Acres of upland wildlife habitat management
- Acres of wetland wildlife habitat management
- Acres of riparian wildlife habitat
- Acres of aquatic wildlife habitat management
- Acres of threatened and endangered species habitat benefited